

ANDOVER HEALTH DEPARTMENT

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR FLOODING CLEANUP

May, 2006

Floods can have a devastating effect on those who go through them. Flood damage could be the result of a catastrophic rain fall that causes water bodies to overflow, heavy snow melt that enters basements, back up of septic and sewage systems into the home, or even the collapse of a nearby pool. This document is designed to provide guidance in ensuring that the home is cleaned thoroughly and properly.

Disinfectants

Disinfectants can either be bought or made at home. When using a commercial product, always follow the manufacturer's recommendations, and **never** use it in concentrations greater than recommended (too much of a good thing is not good!). Always wear protective gloves, boots, and eyewear when undertaking cleanup efforts.

A bleach solution can be prepared by adding a quarter cup of household bleach to one gallon of water. Wash surfaces first with soapy water, rinse, then apply disinfectant and let dry.

Cellars

If possible, wait for ground water or flooded surface water to naturally recede to below floor level. If unable to wait, pump water to a street drainage system (pumping flooded stream water back into the flooded stream will only perpetuate the problem), being mindful that the pressure of the water saturated soils on the outside of the foundation could cause the foundation to buckle or collapse. If you note this type of damage to your foundation, stop all pumping and consult a structural engineer or your Building Department.

All wet surfaces should be cleaned of dirt and then washed with a disinfectant (see section on preparing disinfectant).

Floors

Mud and other debris should be removed as completely as possible, and then the floors should be washed and sanitized. Area rugs should be discarded, professionally cleaned, or removed and flushed with fresh water, then scrubbed with a detergent and disinfectant. Air dry rugs following a rinse. Carpeting should be professionally cleaned or removed.

Furniture

Clean and wash surfaces with mild soap and water, wiping dry immediately, then disinfect if appropriate for surface. Mattresses and upholstered furniture should be disposed of or cleaned and disinfected by a professional cleaner.

Clothing

Clothing should be laundered or dry cleaned as soon as possible. Use special deodorizing compounds available from hardware stores and local cleaners to remove musty odors and kill mildew.

Electrical Appliances

Be sure that all electrical appliances are dry and in good repair. Check for loose or frayed cords, and consult manufacturers to ensure that the product is safe for use following immersion in water.

Safety Precautions

Never enter a flooded area where electrical power is still connected and appliances may still be “hot”. Contact your local power company or electrician to disconnect the power before entering that area.

Always follow the instructions of your licensed professional electricians and plumber/gas fitters, and never conduct plumbing or electrical repairs on your own.

Well Water

If your drinking water supply is from a private well, do not consume the water until it is tested. Surface water flooding may contaminate the supply itself, or your well head and supply tubing. Contact your town’s water or waste water treatment plant, or a private testing laboratory for assistance in sampling; do not submit a sample unless it has been drawn directly into a bottle supplied by the lab. At a minimum, water should be tested for fecal coliform bacteria. It is advised that more in depth testing for certain chemicals be conducted if the well is in an area that could receive runoff from an industrial area.

Septic Systems

It is unclear what permanent damage may result from having a septic system submerged in flood waters. If the septic system is submerged and the house is occupied, do not dispose of waste water through your system. If the septic system has not backed up into the home, it very well could with that extra flow.

Once flood waters have receded, have the septic tank pumped and inspected by a licensed pumper. He/she can make recommendations on what needs to be done for your system. Never attempt to make any repairs by yourself; improper repairs can damage both your system and the environment. Consult your pumper for pumping frequency.

Sewer Back-ups

Due to the sheer amount of water passing through the rivers, streams, sewer lines, and drainage systems, it is known that sewer systems will back up into basements and living areas. Large amounts of sewerage in a basement should be vacuumed out by a sewer pumper, who will dispose of it properly.

Contaminated items and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected or discarded.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Board of Health	978-623-8295
Building Dept.	978-623-8300
Fire Dept.	978-475-1281
Plumbing Insp.	978-623- 8301
Electrical Insp.	978-623-8301
Public Works	978-623-8350

This information is provided by the Andover Health Department adapted from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Brookline Health Department